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FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS BUDGET FOR GROWTH, LAYING FOUNDATION FOR 2016 AND BEYOND

This morning, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners unanimously passed the county's 2016 budget, which adheres closely to the commissioners' core principles of Responsive Government, Community Safety, Economic Development, Supportive Human Services, and Good Stewardship of the Environment. The budget reflects Franklin County's recent growth and the anticipation of continued strong economic and population growth, and emphasizes fiscal responsibility as reflected by the county's ongoing Double Triple-A bond ratings.

The commissioners oversee 14 county agencies directly, and set the budget for all other agencies and elected offices as well. The 2016 All Funds Budget, which includes expenses that are required by law, is \$1.47 billion, and the General Fund Budget, over which the commissioners have more discretion, is \$420.9 million, a 2.3% increase over 2015 projected expenditures, and almost 4% less than had been originally requested by the various county agencies. Since 2005, the number of Franklin County residents has grown by more than 15%, making our county the fastest growing in Ohio. That growth is projected to continue, increasing by 25% between 2010 and 2040.

"Franklin County has weathered the aftermath of the Great Recession well," said Board of Commissioners President, Marilyn Brown. "Today we've laid a foundation for growth and economic expansion in the coming years, while also focusing our attention and resources on our residents who have not yet gotten back on their feet."

The largest portion of the All Funds Budget, making up almost 47%, is funding for social and human services. This includes the county's Job and Family Services agency, which administers federal, state, and local benefits programs, and contracts with local non-profits to provide services such as job training and support, and learning-readiness, after-school, and diversion programs for at-risk youth.

More than half of the General Fund Budget supports the sheriff's office, court system, and other public safety initiatives. Reflecting the commissioners' commitment to efficient, responsive government, and despite increasing demands for services, the 2016 budget includes 270 fewer full-time equivalent staff positions than in 2008, and adds \$10 million to the county's "Rainy Day Fund" and other strategic reserves, as well as \$5 million in contingency funds to cover unforeseen expenditures throughout the year.

"Good jobs, a clean and secure community, and fiscal prudence have always been my guideposts," said Commissioner Paula Brooks. "This balanced budget reflects those, and assures our Franklin County families will continue to prosper, and that our middle class will grow.

More than \$9 million in the 2016 budget is earmarked for Economic Development, including the commissioners' Smart Works initiatives, which are revolving loan and grant projects designed to encourage new infrastructure building, energy efficient projects, and matching newly-trained prospective employees with local companies building a high-quality workforce.

"Franklin County is a great place to build a business or raise a family," said Commissioner John O'Grady. "With this budget, we're working to make sure that our population growth is sustainable, and that both businesses and families have what they need to succeed."

The 2016 budget includes more than \$15 million in investments in the county's water and sewer system to ensure compliance with EPA regulations, and \$5.7 million in funding for the Veterans Service Commission, a 9.1% increase over last year. Among other services, this funding provides immediate financial assistance for food and rent, transportation, and consultations on benefits for active duty personnel, and veterans and their dependents, and represents the commissioners' commitment to the men and women who have served our nation in the armed forces.

The full, approved 2016 budget can be found online at <u>budget.franklincountyohio.gov</u>. The next General Session meeting of the Franklin County Board of Commissioners will be on January 5th and the commissioners will meet on January 11th, 2016 to select next year's board president.

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For more information on the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, call the Office of Public Affairs at (614) 525-3322 or visit commissioners.franklincountyohio.gov.